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INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 0058
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 0081
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 0158
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0449
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHMFIS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T RABAT 000315

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DEPT FOR NEA/I, NEA/MAG; BAGHDAD FOR HWG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2016

TAGS: AF IZ MARR MO MOPS PINS PREL PTER MASS

SUBJECT: MOROCCO ON DONATIONS TO IRAQI AND AFGHAN SECURITY
FORCES, MOROCCAN HOSTAGES

REF: STATE 22896

Classified By: DCM Wayne J. Bush for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

¶1. (S) DCM met February 22 with newly appointed Director General for Multilateral Affairs and Director for Arab and Islamic Affairs Mohamed Azeroual to discuss reftel requirements regarding potential Moroccan donations for Iraqi and Afghan security forces. Azeroual asserted that the Iraqis would certainly not accept Moroccan or any Arab troops on the ground, but noted that as he was not an expert in military equipment and training, he would pass along the information to Minister Delegate Fassi Fihri, currently traveling with King Mohamed in Africa, for a decision. DCM pledged to also consult the GOM on the military side through post's Office of Defense Cooperation channels.

¶2. (C) Regarding the two Moroccans currently being held hostage in Iraq, Azeroual, who has spent the better part of the last three months in Jordan and neighboring Gulf countries working the issue, said he had information that they are both still alive. Unfortunately, he noted that it was impossible to have any kind of direct contact with the hostage-takers whom he alleged were part of Zarqawi's group, and that any contact had to be through intermediaries, an often time-consuming process. So far, the hostage-takers had not set any terms, including asking for ransom or for the Moroccans to close their Embassy in Baghdad. Azeroual said he was returning to Jordan in a few days time to continue his efforts to get the two hostages, whom he described as a driver and a steward, released. As of February 23, the hostages had been held for 127 days, and their images continue to appear daily on the front pages of some Moroccan newspapers and news broadcasts.

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